

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

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STILWELL: GOP BUDGET PLACES ABE LINCOLN SITE IN PERIL

INDIANAPOLIS – State Rep. Russ Stilwell (D-Boonville) said today that funding cuts contained in a biennial state budget plan crafted by Indiana General Assembly Republicans place the Young Abe Lincoln Amphitheater at risk of shutting down.

Ironically, the news comes as officials are beginning to formulate plans for an Indiana celebration of our 16th president's birthday in 2009.

"In the state budget approved by the Republicans in the House and Senate, the Young Abe Lincoln Amphitheater receives \$270,000 in funding the first year of the biennium, which runs from July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006," Stilwell said. "In the second year (July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007), only \$1 has been appropriated for the facility.

"It goes without saying that the amphitheater cannot survive on just a single dollar of state assistance," he continued. "Officials at the University of Southern Indiana, which oversees the site, have done a wonderful job of facilitating the play over the past several years. Without that assistance, I cannot see any way this place can stay open after this year."

The funding loss comes on the heels of the passage of House Enrolled Act 1540, which creates an Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission that would be responsible for honoring the president and educating Indiana residents of his life and achievements in preparation for the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth on February 12, 2009.

"People come to the Lincoln State Park in Spencer County from all across the country to see the various tributes to our 16th president that take place at the amphitheater," Stilwell said. "I'm sure it would amaze many people to know that Abraham Lincoln spent most of his youth right here in Indiana, so this attraction is a very educational experience.

"It is astounding to me that the state is laying the groundwork for a tribute to this great man, yet turning its back on a facility that would be a focal point for our celebrations," he continued. "What kind of tributes can we perform when this amphitheater, located in the very area where Lincoln lived, is shut down?

"The folks who were responsible for these cuts should reevaluate their actions. I will make every effort to ensure future budgets contain this funding. I can only hope that the facility is still open when we take up discussions on a new state budget in the 2007 session," Stilwell concluded.

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This news release can be accessed on the Internet at www.IN.gov/H74